

Dear President Wolfe,

First off, let us welcome and congratulate you as the President of the University of Missouri System. The opportunity to lead your former Alma mater and be in a position to influence the direction of the system to the benefit and betterment of the future generation leaders from your home state must be truly exciting. The alumni and students of the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute (NSEI) at the Columbia campus wish you great success and hope you find the experience personally gratifying.

Unfortunately, we write to you under a dark cloud to express our grave concerns regarding the recent closure of the NSEI. Alumni and students alike are left in a state of confusion and despair over the recent events that have transpired. We are confused because we don't fully understand what is occurring, how it is occurring, and why it is occurring. We are in despair because the recent actions are likely to have a significant negative impact on the NSEI alumni and students currently seeking degrees through the institute. This is particularly troublesome for students pursuing degrees in Medical Physics, a relatively new occupational field that relies on a small number of accredited institutions to supply professionals with the highly specialized skills needed to serve the industry. Medical Physics programs are accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Physics Educational Programs (CAMPEP). The CAMPEP website (<http://www.campep.org/campeplstgrad.asp>) lists the 36 programs that have received accreditation in the United States and Canada through February, 2012. Students cannot obtain the necessary licensing to practice in the field of Medical Physics if they received their training at an institution that is not CAMPEP accredited. The NSEI is one of a few institutions to have received CAMPEP accreditation for training of Medical Physics professionals and this accreditation is in certain jeopardy given the recent decision to close the institute.

Besides, the Nuclear Engineering (Medical Physics) degree, the NSEI also offers Nuclear Engineering degrees which emphasize power & health physics. – all three areas offer students the opportunity of lucrative careers upon graduation. Students who join the NSEI to get a nuclear engineering degree do so after giving very specific consideration to the program's rating, its reputation, its faculty and its facilities. Alumni of the institute benefit from the existence of the NSEI, its high rating, and its excellent reputation as it helps them in promotions, obtaining grants, and garners professional respect. It is clear that students and alumni of the NSEI have been irreparably harmed by the closure of the institute. Those who are currently pursuing or who have just recently received their degree from NSEI are in the most vulnerable position as they enter the toughest job market in decades having to defend their degree from a program that no longer exists as of March 15, 2012.

Another constituency whose concerns have also received inadequate acknowledgement in the NSEI's closure includes the new and pending applicants to the program. NSEI faculty have informed us that the program has received 66 new applicants and that 6 of those have been accepted. They applied for a program which offers a nuclear engineering degree, which has now been terminated. At this point, it is unclear if the University of Missouri has notified these applicants who, in good faith, trusted the University of Missouri to look after their best interests. Assuming those applicants were informed immediately, they already face the prospect of missing application deadlines and will have to put their careers on hold until the next application cycle.

Students and alumni of the NSEI support change that is well thought out, constructively motivated and effected, and which occurs with adequate, well-considered input from all interested stakeholders. Exactly where Nuclear Engineering is housed is not really important. What is important is that the Nuclear Engineering identity, curriculum and degrees (with emphasis areas) be preserved, that the CAMPEP accredited Medical Physics identity and curriculum be preserved along with the actual accreditation, and that the best interests of everyone be preserved, promoted and enhanced overall; including, and perhaps especially, the interests of the current students and of alumni who have received degrees from the program. It is the view of students and alumni of the NSEI that the apparent hastiness of last week's decision to close the NSEI does not acknowledge that it is the students and alumni of the institute that may have the most at stake regarding its closure.

Faculty and current students enrolled within the NSEI received notice on Monday, March 12, 2012, that their institute would close on Thursday, March 15, 2012. The Graduate School Dean, George Justice, spoke with current students about the impending closure, in person, at their weekly seminar on Tuesday March 13, 2012. Alumni of the NSEI have yet to receive any formal communication from the University of Missouri regarding the closure of the institute. Advanced degrees in engineering and physical sciences require years to complete and the extremely short notice provided to the institute seems wholly inappropriate and unfair to students who are currently enrolled. Students weren't even provided the courtesy of a full week to digest the fact that the NSEI was closing and that they are now faced with the prospect of restarting from scratch or giving up on credentials that were once within their grasp.

Students and alumni don't understand why the closure must be executed so quickly, given that an outsized portion of the burden falls on them. An article in the March 12, 2012 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune titled, "MU's nuclear science institute to be split," George Justice, Dean of the Graduate School at MU cites a need to stream-line administration of faculty tenure as a reason for closing the NSEI. In this same article, Dean Justice also cites a review of the NSEI performed in 2010. Although this review was mostly positive, apparently, some faculty from outside of the NSEI were interviewed who felt the personalities of the NSEI faculty prevented them from collaborating with the institute. It is not clear which reason carried greatest influence in the decision to close the NSEI. Neither of these reasons would seem to compel an urgent and immediate closure to the institute. An article in the March 18, 2012 edition of the Columbia Missourian titled, "Students, faculty worry as MU Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute dissolves," reports that a separate review was also performed in 2011 by CAMPEP praising the institute for being interdisciplinary. This undercuts the already weak rationale based on the solitary weak point in the 2010 review that the NSEI should be closed because of a failure by faculty to collaborate with faculty of other disciplines. In this article, though, Dean Justice cites a third reason for the closure of the NSEI in that the existence of the program creates an inconvenience in lab space allocation for the College of Engineering.

Dean Justice spoke with students at the NSEI's weekly seminar on March 13, 2012 and provided students with a blanket assurance that their plan of study, degrees, and that CAMPEP accreditation weren't at risk due to the NSEI's closure (see "Dean reassures students: Nuclear science institute altered" in the March 14, 2012 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune).

According to Dean Justice, nothing should change significantly since the NSEI is merely being dissolved by existing academic programs and the NSEI faculty are free to continue their close collaboration in their new academic homes. The article does not state explicitly where those new academic homes will be and, thus far, Dean Justice has not consulted with the NSEI faculty regarding the details of such a decision. The NSEI faculty have informed us that any planning or strategizing regarding the NSEI's closure was performed without any solicitation of input from them. The failure to engage NSEI faculty means that Dean Justice has no way of knowing at this point if these faculty will agree to move to a new academic home at MU or will simply choose to move on entirely, in which case, the students will be left hanging. Given these facts, how is the sureness expressed by Dean Justice regarding the fate of the NSEI students justified?

Some of the funding agencies that support students within the NSEI include the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and the Department of Education which supplies funding for many students through Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) fellowships. The impact this move has on accreditation of the Medical Physics program and student grants can't be known until CAMPEP and the funding agencies that support many of the students are consulted. It's likely that this would require multiple phone calls and letters between those agencies and MU. Additionally, it's likely that CAMPEP would request a visit to MU, and at the very least, request MU submit a new plan for the Medical Physics program that reflects the updated administrative structure before approving accreditation under the new structure. According to the NSEI faculty, a university commitment to the NSEI framework has been a requirement for the funding they receive from the NRC and for GAANN fellowships and that this commitment also extends to several grants and contracts the NSEI has with the Department of Energy (DOE). If changes to the agreements with these funding agencies have been made, extensive documentation should exist that reflects that the various funding agencies have agreed to alter their contracts with the University of Missouri. Students would feel more comfortable accepting Dean Justice's broad assurances if MU administration could provide such documentation as evidence that the closure of the NSEI has been performed in a manner that reflects thoughtfulness and due diligence and which is more than warranted given the potential harm inflicted to students and alumni of the institute. An apparent admission is made by Dean Justice that the University of Missouri has not yet consulted with CAMPEP regarding the restructuring (see March 18, 2012 edition of the Columbia Missourian titled, "Students, faculty worry as MU Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute dissolves,"). In light of this, Dean Justice's broad assurances to students appear empty and illustrate a disregard for their well-being in the process.

In this same article, Dean Justice discusses plans to replace NSEI with a program and a director who is in charge of faculty members affiliated with several departments. Dean Justice explains that he has not yet begun the search for the new director but that he hopes to have one by July 1, 2012. Officials have not provided clear rationale for the July 1, 2012 hiring date and have not explained the implications of such timing on CAMPEP accreditation. As it appears the university has not yet contacted CAMPEP regarding the program restructure, we don't believe they can know what the implications are. By closing the NSEI before beginning the search for the new program director, and by providing public reassurances regarding the security of the university's CAMPEP accreditation, we feel the negotiating position of the university has been compromised. The university subjects itself to undue pressure to hire the new program director in attempts to

fill in the void that's been created by closure of the NSEI and the university's public reassurance that they will maintain CAMPEP accreditation for students. We find it presumptuous that the university has closed the NSEI before initiating a search for a director of the restructured program. Positions with increasing levels of leadership responsibility have access to smaller pools of qualified applicants. We feel that officials will be compelled to rush the process of hiring a new director and, in doing so, face a decision to pay a high quality director at salary that is much greater than market value or to hire a director of lower quality, thereby placing the CAMPEP accreditation at risk.

Dean Justice also explains that in the new program, students will receive degrees in "Nuclear Science" rather than "Nuclear Engineering". The distinction is not inconsequential as current CAMPEP accreditation is for degrees in Nuclear Engineering. Dean Justice states later in this article that, "Programs change all the time, and the accreditation doesn't go away." This statement by Dean Justice is too vague and provided without reference to its basis. If his statements are relevant to MU's CAMPEP accreditation, students and alumni would like to know exactly which CAMPEP accredited programs are changing all the time while maintaining continuity in their accreditation. We must assume that a thorough assessment of the effects of program changes on CAMPEP accreditation has been performed and well documented by Dean Justice and that this serves as the basis for his statement. In the absence of such documentation, the reassurances provided by Dean Justice again reflect disregard for the well-being of the students.

Students and alumni of the NSEI believe that the abruptness of the NSEI's closure is truly motivated by clashes between the NSEI faculty and a small subset of campus administration. The formation of the NSEI in 2002 was a clever solution by administration to diffuse the animosity between the Dean of the College of Engineering and the NSEI faculty who were formally faculty within the College of Engineering. Battles between the two parties have been a source of controversy and embarrassment for the university for a number of years. The two parties continued to be at odds after the creation of the NSEI and students have occasionally been caught-up in the cross-fire, but the separate administrative structure has helped to minimize the distraction and harm to students over the years so that they have been mostly unaffected. It is anticipated that the College of Engineering is where the NSEI faculty are expected to make their new home under the mandate handed down to them by Dean Justice. It is not clear how conditions have changed since the inception of NSEI in 2002 given that all the personnel at the center of the original controversy remain. By shifting the structure so that one party of a bitter dispute is in a direct position of power over the other party, an escalation of this conflict is imminent which is likely to degrade into great toxicity. Students caught in the middle of this environment will not only be significantly distracted from their work but will also be vulnerable to the various forms of abuse that are common in toxic workplace environments. We express dismay at what appears to be a willingness to toss students from the NSEI into the middle of such an environment without a clear explanation from administration as to how it intends to manage potential situations in which students are caught in the middle of flare-ups between the divided parties. There may be temptation to assign blame to the victims (students) in these scenarios but, to do so, fails to acknowledge the role of the university in creating the environment and funneling students into the middle of it.

The College of Engineering is currently preoccupied with some controversy surrounding Prof. Greg Engel and several of his colleagues who brought charges of faculty irresponsibility against him. There has been speculation that closure of the NSEI is an act of retribution against a faculty member of the NSEI who has been vocal in his displeasure with what he felt was an expression of bias against Prof. Engel in this case. The process to determine if his tenure should be removed has consumed a considerable amount of resources by convening a student review, multiple faculty reviews, and by engaging the Provost and Chancellor of the university. Irrespective of the necessity for these expenditures, the process is far from efficient. We feel this undercuts one of the arguments that closure of the NSEI is necessary to ease the administrative burdens of managing the NSEI. Transferring the NSEI faculty back to their old College of Engineering homes fails to acknowledge why the NSEI was formed in the first place and is likely to reinvigorate long standing disputes between those faculty and the Dean of the College of Engineering. In the case of Prof. Engel, the College of Engineering was unable to resolve an internal conflict and prevent it from consuming a considerable amount of resources from the university at large. We feel it is doubtful that the College of Engineering will be able to keep a lid on conflicts arising between the NSEI faculty and the Dean of the College of Engineering if they are transitioned to a home within the College of Engineering. Further, it is doubtful that the burden associated with managing an inconveniently structured NSEI exceeds the burden of administering multiple flare-ups which end-up consuming resources across the campus at large.

President Wolfe, students and faculty of the NSEI are galvanizing behind what's been allowed to transpire and will do what is within our power to ensure that those involved in the deciding and execution of its closure are held accountable for their obligations to who we feel are the most important stakeholders of this decision. Officials responsible for executing the closure of the NSEI have so far provided vague and shifting rationale for closure of the institute, none of which we feel are particularly clear or compelling. The reasons provided suggest that closure of the NSEI was executed without ever acknowledging the concerns of students and alumni of the NSEI and the process appears to lack a level of thoughtfulness and due diligence warranted by the significance of the impact on students and alumni of the NSEI. On multiple occasions, Dean Justice has exhibited a willingness to provide broad assurances that the University of Missouri's CAMPEP accreditation is secure without providing a credible basis to support such assurances. We lack confidence that Dean Justice can be trusted to preserve, promote and enhance the best interests of all parties overall. Thus far, three reasons have been provided as rationale for the NSEI's closure and include a desire to streamline administration of tenure, accusations that faculty within the institute are not sufficiently collaborative, and that the NSEI creates an inconvenience in lab space allocation for the College of Engineering. The first argument is undercut by the prospect of refereeing of endless disputes between longtime rivals who will be rejoined by the restructuring. The burden of administering these disputes is likely greater than the burden of an inconveniently structured NSEI. The second argument is undercut by a review that CAMPEP performed of the program in 2011 which praised the interdisciplinary collaboration of the NSEI. It appears that the inconvenience the NSEI poses to the College of Engineering with respect to lab space allocation is what's driving the University of Missouri to bestow a great deal of hardship on students and alumni of the NSEI, and to close what has been a highly rated and successful institution providing the university with an excellent return-on-investment (ROI).

President Wolfe, we seek your considerable influence in effecting an immediate reversal to the irrational closure of the NSEI and an immediate return to the status quo; we seek your considerable influence to prohibit future efforts at closure until administration provides written statements clearly articulating their goals and objectives for closing the institute; we seek your considerable influence to prohibit future efforts at closure until after administration performs a thorough and diligent assessment of how students of the NSEI will be impacted by closure of the institute, including an assessment of the potential impact of program changes on CAMPEP accreditation, and how administrators plan to ensure the well-being of students they plant in the middle of a bitter dispute between long-time rivals. Finally, we seek your considerable influence to prohibit future efforts at closure until after administration performs a thorough and diligent assessment of how alumni will be impacted by closure of the institute, including an assessment of the potential impact of loss of CAMPEP accreditation on alumni who are not yet licensed.

Sincerely,

Students and Alumni of NSEI, Alumni of MU Nuclear Engineering (pre-2002):

Ryan M. Meyer, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2007  
Christina Plies Osmer, M.S., Ph.D., DABR, NSEI Alum 2001, 2010  
Zebadiah M. Smith, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2010  
Earl Lynn Tipton, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2008  
Annie YuNing Hsu Tipton Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2009  
Yoonjo Lee, J.D., NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Kyle L. Walton, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Jason B. Rothenberger, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2011  
Matthew P. Simones, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Matthew A. Boraas, NSEI M.S. Student  
Krishnendu Saha, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2007  
Ching-Mei Janet Feng, Ph.D., DABR, NSEI Alum 1999  
Haruetai Kasiwattanawut, NSEI M.S. Student  
Veera Rajesh Gutti, Ph.D, NSEI Alum 2010  
Sunita R Boddu, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2010  
Giang N Nguyen, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Kyuhak Oh, M.S., NSEI Alum 2011  
Samantha Price, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Kuan Ling (Gwen) Chen, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2011  
Chung hao (Curtis) Huang, NSEI M.S. Student  
Michael L. Reinig Jr., NSEI Ph.D. Student  
John-David Seelig, NSEI M.S. Student  
Eben S. Allen, NSEI M.S. Student  
Thomas M. Oakes NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Krishna K. Ramesh, M.S., NSEI (Medical Physics) Alum 2010  
Shawn A. Campbell, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Hakan Us, NSEI M.S. Student  
Denis Wisniewski, NSEI M.S. Student  
Nicholas A. Martin, NSEI M.S. Student  
Joongmoo Shim, NSEI M.S. Student  
Timothy Bussey M.S., NSEI Alum 2009

James Kramer, M.S., NSEI Alum 2006  
Rajat Kudchadker, Ph.D., DABR, NE Alum 1996  
Jake Walker, M.S., NSEI Alum 2011  
Avijit Varma, M.S., NE Alum 1994  
Bogdan Coroi, M.S., DABR, NSEI Alum 1994  
Jeancarlo Torres, M.S., NSEI Alum 2007, US Navy Health Physicist  
Greg Hirtz, M.S., NE Alum 1991  
Thomas Jongwan Kwon, Ph.D., NE Alum 2000  
Paramita Sengupta, M.S., NSEI Alum 2005  
Bijal Patel, M.S., NSEI Alum 2007  
Terry Wu, Ph.D., DABR, DABMP, NE Alum  
Eric Steinfelds, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2003  
Leroy Lee, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Daniel Montenegro, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2011  
Jaewoo Kim, Ph.D., NE Alum 2000  
Matthew L. Watermann, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Andrew Casella, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2007  
Amanda Casella, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2008  
Bhavin Patadiya, M.S., DABR, NSEI Alum 2004  
Robert Schott, NSEI Ph.D. Student  
Zhegang Ma, Ph.D., NSEI Alum 2007  
Sean Branney, MS 2008, PhD 2010